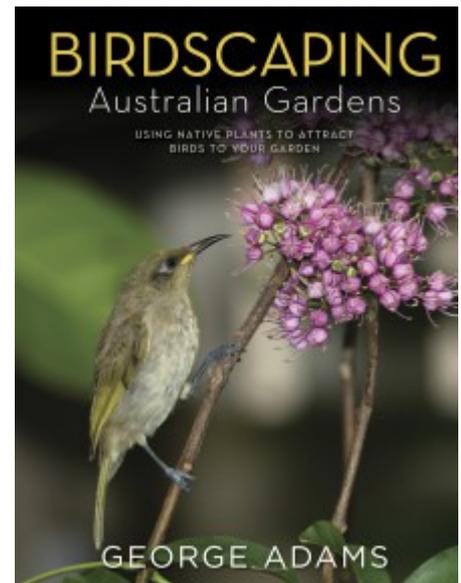


Birdscaping Australian Gardens

AUTHOR: GEORGE ADAMS



How birds help your garden grow

There are almost 900 species of Australian birds, and choosing the native plants they love is the best way to invite them to visit your garden. Birds are beautiful, and good company – but there's even more reason to ask them over. Simply by being your garden, birds actually help it grow strong and stay healthy.

In *Birdscaping Australian Gardens*, award-winning architect and author George Adams explains, "Native birds have symbiotic relationships with native plants, so that while they feed on the plants they are also performing important ecological functions for them."

From *Birdscaping Australian Gardens*, here are three ways birds help your garden grow:

Seed dispersal. "Many native plants rely on birds to carry their seed to suitable areas for germination," Adams notes. "The bird eats the fruit and passes the seed with its droppings as a ready-made fertiliser." So the more delicious a plant's fruit, the more birds it attracts; more birds equals more poop; and more poop equals more seeds being propagated. "The plant and bird work together in a harmonious and successful partnership."

Pest control. "One of the great things about landscaping for birds is that you're attracting some of nature's most effective pest controllers," Adams states. "Birds are the most important force in nature, keeping insect populations in balance and protecting plants from infestation. Most species of birds include some insects in their diet; some are completely insectivorous." Some birds, like the Eastern Shrike-tit, will even rid your plants of dead, disease-prone bark and leaves when foraging for insects.

Pollination. "Self-pollination would result in a genetic weakening of the species," Adams writes, whereas "cross-pollination produces a more vigorous, adaptable and flexible plant." Birds can be extremely helpful collaborators in this process. When they brush their feathers against a plant or poke their beak into a flower, they're dusted with pollen which they then carry to other parts of your garden. "In Australia, a most significant pollinator is the honeyeater," Adams writes. "Their diets consist largely and sometimes exclusively of nectar; both flower and bird have specialised to meet each other's needs."